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Korea, Republic of

Food and Agricultural Import Regulations and Standards

Subject Report: Biotech Labeling for Unprocessed Potatoes

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Report Highlights: Effective March 1, 2002, the Ministry of Agriculture & Forestry requires unprocessed potatoes enhanced through biotechnology be labeled if the shipment contains a 3-percent or higher biotech-enhanced component. Other such commodities include corn, soybeans and soybean sprouts.

Includes PSD changes: No
Includes Trade Matrix: No
Unscheduled Report
Seoul [KS1], KS

As of March 1, 2002, the Korean Ministry of Agriculture & Forestry (MAF) requires unprocessed potatoes enhanced through biotechnology be labeled if the shipment contains a 3-percent or higher biotech-enhanced component. Unprocessed potato is now added to the list of other unprocessed commodities (corn, soybeans, soybean sprouts) MAF requires to be labeled according to the presence of a biotech component. See KS1004.

On April 22, 2000, MAF issued guidelines for labeling of listed biotech-enhanced commodities. Potatoes were included on that list but with an effective date of March 1, 2002. Any potato commodity that maintains its original form - has not undergone processing (i.e., crushing, cutting, pressing, heating, etc.), must now be labeled.

New labeling requirements for unprocessed potatoes are implemented with a six-month probationary period to allow time for the market to adjust. During the probationary period, MAF will focus on educating and providing guidance to the industry on proper labeling of potato products. With implementation of labeling requirements for biotech enhanced corn, soybean and soybean sprout, MAF guidance to importers came in the form of identification and application of the proper label prior to authorizing release from Customs detention. Note: MAF retains the authority during this interim enforcement period to impose penalties against businesses that intentionally falsely mislabel their products.

The National Agricultural Product Quality Control Agency, MAF, holds responsibility to collect and test samples for biotech component presence.

MAF advises biotech labeling requirements for unprocessed potatoes would be subject to further review if market condition's change. Until such reviews are initiated and notified to the public, MAF will require the seller of unprocessed potatoes enhanced through biotechnology (inclusive of importers, wholesalers, retailers, bean sprout producers) to label the product.

The Korea Food & Drug Administration (KFDA), which has jurisdiction over processed potato products, is expected to issue shortly a revision to its biotech labeling guidelines. KFDA is anticipated to require labeling of processed products that contain potato or potato-based products as one of the five major ingredients. A KFDA announcement would be consistent with Korean regulations that require processed foods derived from biotech-enhanced commodities identified by MAF to be labeled.

Once KFDA announces information on revised labeling requirements for processed potato products KS1046 will be modified.